

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 098 668

EA 006 506

AUTHOR Roberts, Donald A.
TITLE Changing Patterns of School Governance.
INSTITUTION National Association of Independent Schools, Boston, Mass.
PUB DATE Oct 74
NOTE 41p.
AVAILABLE FROM National Association of Independent Schools, 4 Liberty Square, Boston, Massachusetts 02109. (\$2.00)

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.75 HC Not Available from EDRS. PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Activism; *Educational Change; Educational Innovation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Governance; Private Schools; *School Administration; Student Attitudes; Student Government; Student Organizations; Student Participation; Student Responsibility; *Student Role; *Student School Relationship; Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

The author examines innovative governance patterns in 25 independent schools around the country. Among student concerns are student councils, honor committees, students in advisory capacities, faculty-student senates, all-school meetings, and constitutions. Faculty concerns cover faculty associations, salary scales, faculty representation on boards, faculty meetings, and faculty roles in governance. Effective systems that involve students in governance, the author asserts, are invariably honest, simple in structure, small, challenging, unique to themselves, constantly changing, and based on a belief that some of our students are morally capable of making important decisions. (Author/WH)

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CHANGING PATTERNS OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Donald A. Roberts



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October 1974

National Association of Independent Schools
4 Liberty Square, Boston, Massachusetts 02109

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Printed in U.S.A.

Cover drawing by Adelaide Sproul

Additional copies may be ordered at \$2.00 each from

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
4 Liberty Square, Boston, Massachusetts 02109

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INTRODUCTION

In May 1973, NAIS sent to all its member schools a "Checklist of Effective Approaches," asking heads to check a number of items, either in a programs-to-share column or a we-would-like-to-know-more column. Of the 250 schools that returned these questionnaires, 65 indicated that they had programs to share on the topic "changing patterns of school governance involving students and/or faculty." I was asked to follow up on these responses. After reviewing the questionnaires, some of which contained brief descriptions of innovative governance programs, I wrote to the 65 schools, asking for pertinent details, and then visited about 25--those I could manage to squeeze into a crowded three-week itinerary.

Not at all off the subject is the nature of the schools' response to my correspondence and visits. On short notice and at a deadly time--during and immediately after Christmas vacation--every head I had queried responded, quickly, with copious information, and, in almost every instance, with an invitation to come and see. If you have forgotten, independent schools are warm, friendly, attractive places; no one was ever too busy to fit me into a busy schedule, and heads, assistant heads, teachers, and students tolerated my blundering questions and seemed to enjoy the opportunity of talking about their partial successes and lingering failures in governance.

These are good people--Bill Downs, of Rockland Country Day, devoting most of a busy Monday to the "traveling man" from NAIS; Doug McClure trying to get to his Princeton Day School office at 8:00 a.m. through a bombardment of teachers and students, each with a plea for "just one minute," and still finding time to wave and say hopefully, "Be right with you"; Howard Jones, recently alighted from Hong Kong and about to head for some other hemisphere, taking the time to find me a parking place at snowbanked Northfield Mount Hermon; Pete Melcher taking time off from his new tractor-snowplow to share with me his excitement about the brand-new Southborough School; Christopher Berrisford providing four single-spaced pages of wise insights about governance at Harvard School; or his Thatcher compatriot, Edgar Sanford, taking the time to annotate closely two years of minutes from the School Council. And twenty other heads just as helpful, because of their interest in a topic that grew increasingly more challenging as I pursued it.

Had I stopped at an early stage of my investigation, my thesis would have been pretty pale: Each school, assessing its own character, has tried to devise a system of governance appropriate to that character in this particular time.

Later, I became a bit more cynical, with a new thesis on its way: Heads of schools have devised a token system--"controlled participatory democracy"--to keep students and teachers busy so that heads can devote their attention to real problems, like fuel-oil prices.

And my attempts at a thesis got even gloomier: everybody tries

everything, and nothing really works.

My last stop was at Hyde School, in Bath, Maine, and I had tremors before I got there. "A school with a difference," I had been told. And governance at Hyde was so real and so dramatic, the kids were so beautiful in their shared commitment, and Joe Gauld was so convincing in his pragmatic insistence on new directions in secondary education that I came up with a thesis that knocked all the others for a loop: "Governance" is a lot of hokum unless it means a real love of kids, shared self-examination, and a determination to bend every fiber of a school's structure to the full development of each individual's unique potential.

Now, my journeying over, I'm still pretty strong for love and bending every fiber, but I have so much valuable and interesting information to share that I think I'll beg off a thesis, at least until the evidence has been presented. We can decide together what it all means, later on.

My thanks go to all who helped. Joan Didion writes of her experience as a young reporter: "People tend to forget that my presence runs counter to their best interests. And it always does. That is one last thing to remember: writers are always selling somebody out." I hope that I may do some selling, of strong programs and brave ideas, but, in our mutual best interests, some selling in.

D.A.R.
September 1974

THE STUDENTS

We dislike the seeming triteness in our statement-of-philosophy pronouncements about "caring for the individual student," "meaningful involvement," and the importance of "self-direction and graduated responsibilities." We do, however, believe what we say. Slowly, we are learning what our students can do for themselves, what responsibilities we must shoulder with them, and what decisions can be properly made only by the adult members of the community.

At times we have found it difficult to create appropriate systems of governance that are both warmly human and coolly efficient. Yet, in a very few years, the independent school has begun to make real use of students' talents for self-government. If we heed some cautionary guidelines from Christopher Berrisford, head of Harvard School, in North Hollywood, California, our efforts at increased student involvement in governance should continue to prosper:

1. Separate the information-and-opinion-seeking functions from the decision-making one. Select those decisions that students can make, and the functions that they can perform.
2. Do not expect students to make decisions that you (or they) cannot live with. (E.g., if you have a chapel program and the students do not like it, do not encourage the student committee to investigate whether chapel should exist or not if you cannot accept their recommendation to abolish the program. If you know in advance that it is bound to be kept then develop a student committee to recommend ways of improving it.)
3. Do not let them think that they are making decisions when in practice they are not. (E.g., give students one or two seats on faculty committees or encourage them to be open participants on a Board of Trustees when one knows that they will always be outvoted.)
4. Do not ask them to form decisions in areas where it is obvious that they are not qualified. (E.g., in selecting the subject matter that is to be taught in the classroom--expressing an opinion on what they would like to learn is entirely appropriate, of course.)
5. Do not let anyone make a decision for which he does not, in the long run, have to accept the consequences and responsibilities.

Student Councils

Student councils, bless their departing souls, are mostly moribund or "safely stowed." A few gasp on, but their death rattles disturb and embarrass the good people around them.

The course of their demise is easy to chart. In September, the new student president reminds his cohorts of the "program" he outlined in his campaign speech: a re-examination of the eighteen-year-old drinking question, big-name groups on campus Saturday nights, what's happened to school spirit, a re-examination of the open-dorm question, the hypocrisy of the present smoking rules, a student task force to investigate the food service, and a re-examination of the rule about blue jeans. His opening-meeting conclusion never varies: "And if you guys cooperate, and we really work at it, this can be the best . . ."

By November, the school paper has had at least two editorials. One lashes out at apathy and lack of support from the student body, citing poor attendance at meetings, lack of meaningful proposals, and loss of "the school spirit there used to be in this place when I first came here four years ago." The other editorial, also de rigueur, must chide the administration for its lack of trust in the students and their governmental organization: "This distrust serves to pit the students against the school instead of having them cooperate. . . . If this institution treats an individual like a child unable to make simple decisions for himself, how can it in turn expect him to act like the adult he will soon become?" (The Bridge, Northfield Mount Hermon, December 5, 1973).

By December, the student council has been driven to the decisive moment of typing a list of proposals and submitting them to the faculty:

- . . . that the use of taps, or "lights out," be eliminated for juniors.
- . . . that the number of hours a student must work to work off a demerit be lowered from 9 to 3 or some intermediate number.
- . . . that students be permitted downtown on weekdays, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- . . . that a student should be permitted to grow a moustache under the following conditions:
 1. The moustache must be grown while the student is home, and it must be fully grown or at least well groomed upon the student's return to school. "Fully grown" and "well groomed" shall be interpreted by the hair and dress committee.
 2. The moustache must follow the contour of the upper lip. It shall not pass beyond the point of intersection

of the upper and lower lips. The moustache shall not connect with the sideburns. The ruling on sideburns shall remain the same.

We don't feel that students should be denied what comes naturally. Last spring there was a proposal that would have allowed students to grow beards and moustaches at anytime or anyplace if they were in the process of being well groomed. The present proposal represents an obvious compromise on the part of the students. The faculty and administration should recognize this compromise and be willing to accept it.

(I tried to joke later with the student council president who had framed that last proposal. It was no joking matter. "No, you don't understand," he objected. "A great many students this year--more than in the past--are really capable of growing moustaches." Except for the request for "downtown" privileges on weekdays, the proposals are all turned down. Attendance at the council meetings in February and March drops to a new low for the year. And so on, and so on.

A few schools, however, still find value in traditional types of student organizations. Pine Crest School, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, has an operating Upper School Student Government that has "legislative jurisdiction" to oversee the following:

- A. Establish a fair set of rules by which the student body may profit.
- B. Promote the development of school spirit.
- C. Provide a forum for student expression.
- D. Coordinate student activities.
- E. Promote an understanding among students, faculty, and administration.
- F. Hold elections for the purpose of electing Student Council and Class Officers.

The constitution is a detailed ten-page document. Its most unusual feature, perhaps, is the requirement that all members and officers of the council, all class officers, and the officers of all clubs and other organizations must "maintain a 70 or better average . . . and must have and maintain good conduct along with their academic standing." Most schools have dropped such eligibility requirements for officeholders.

St. Paul's School for Boys, in Brooklandville, Maryland, has altered the usual electoral method of staffing its student council. A candidate

needs only ten signatures to become a representative. Despite the fact that they have "won out" on a number of proposals recently--longer hair, an "open campus"--the students are, according to one observer, "generally apathetic toward the council and toward student power in general."

Although a great many administrators have allowed student councils, per se, to wither and die, others have found them valuable as adjunct organizations to senates, town meetings, or community councils, in which students and adults share the burden of change and the responsibility for that change. At Harvard School, various governance organizations have been set up to handle decisions of differing kinds. Headmaster Christopher Berrisford says, "We have tried to identify those decisions that are properly made by students alone, those that require joint participation, and those which ought to be made by faculty, administrators, or trustees alone."

The Harvard School Student Council does make decisions. "There is a large budget to be allocated as the students see fit, a free forum for student ideas, and autonomy for governing themselves, says dean of students Joe Ozawa. "The headmaster and I confer with students on a regular basis, primarily to test the reality of Council decisions, and Jon Greenberg [the president] has weekly conferences with me, often because he wonders whether Student Council is doing enough." This year's Harvard School council has planned dances and other activities, established several new organizations, including a Ping-Pong club and ham radio club, has gone off campus to compare cafeteria prices and to visit other school organizations, has created a council in the lower school, and has conducted an evaluation of its own constitution. Yet Jon Greenberg feels that the council is "by no means the center of student involvement or interest. The support of the student body and representatives to Council is not consistent nor always enthusiastic. Are our expectations too high?"

Northfield Mount Hermon's Student Association is another good example of the student council in coexistence with a faculty-student senate. Two matters have occupied the association's officers recently: open dorms and girls' physical education requirements. On the matter of coed visiting hours in the dormitories, the association has been working closely with a committee of the Senate. It is interesting, however, that, on the Northfield Mount Hermon campuses, the complaints you hear and the praises are not undifferentiated ones about apathy and lack of action, nor are they usually directed at the Student Association; they are more likely to be quite specific and substantive, and in almost all instances they are aimed at the more powerful and more visible Senate.

At Westtown School, in Westtown, Pennsylvania, where the Quaker principle of corporate decision is evident in the number and quality of governance organizations, there are two student councils, separate organizations for boys and for girls. Anne Wood, principal of the upper school, believes that this "allows the two groups to use their own styles in working on problems and morale and increases the number of leadership opportunities. I know of no other school that does this, but I think with the current emphasis on coeducation it may be a useful idea. For us it works well.

At a few schools--Gilman, in Baltimore, for example--the student council

is virtually the only governance organization that has students in its membership. "We're lucky to be a traditional school," says Mac Finney, the council's president. "We have lots of spirit, and we're getting some things done this year." After an early-fall continuation of last year's "hot issue"--off-campus conduct of students, especially at parties where alcohol was served--the council worked out an acceptable proposal for an on-campus parking area for student cars, and it is now formulating plans for a Work-Day Program. Mac feels that the council system at Gilman is a good one, but he recognizes the limits of its influence: "We know that the trustees govern this school. . . . Students try for a little more power each year, but they won't get it at Gilman."

Two recent attempts at increased student involvement at Gilman, both recommended three years ago by a Governance Committee that studied decision-making bodies at the school, have been tried without success. A joint Educational Planning-Curriculum Committee, with representatives from both the faculty and student body, operated "for about a year and then ran out of gas," according to headmaster Redmond C. S. Finney. A Judiciary Committee, composed of seven student members, now sits as an "appeals board," to the obvious displeasure of some Gilman students, who feel that the group's power has eroded in recent years.

In its 1971 report, the Governance Committee at Gilman "considered such major innovations as a Student-Faculty Senate but decided against recommending them for the present, feeling that the present system of a Student Council had merit in that it places responsibility on the student body as a separate unit, and also feeling that the present system could be modified to allow the desired broad-based participation." To provide that broader base, Gilman has instituted School Forums, organized and administered by members of the Student Council, which have been effective means for the presentation of student proposals and have worked as "safety valves," even though they were not originally conceived as question-and-answer sessions.

Gilman's good experience to the contrary, student councils are dying in the independent schools--and in many public schools, too. (See the description of the Staples Governing Board at Staples High School, in Westport, Connecticut, on page 18.) Student government presidents are enchanted with the "potential power" of their organizations, but are almost unanimous in their frustrations at "getting anything done." Many heads would agree with Rollin P. Baldwin, director of the Baldwin School of New York City, that it is "increasingly difficult to get the most worthy candidates to run for office. Even in a time of receding militarism," says Baldwin, "the kids are more interested in doing their own thing. There certainly has been a general falling off of interest in government, but at the same time students are less suspicious of administration. They come to me directly, and frequently."

What's wrong with student legislative bodies? A few things seem obvious:

1. Students are immediately--and justifiably?--cynical about the "power and responsibility" they have been

given. What they want they can't get; and what they get they don't really care about very much.

2. Power and prestige are placed in the hands of a very few students. Student bodies do not willingly or effectively work under such leadership; among adolescents, there is at least an aversion to admitting that "any other kid is better than I am--or much better." Also, in setting up an organization with one or two senior leaders, you have knocked the props from your contention that such councils are valuable arenas for the practice of compromise, consensus, public speaking, parliamentary practice.
3. Students feel--and they are not always wrong--that student council officers, if they are to accomplish anything, must play along with (not their term) the administration. (Edgar Sanford: "Too often, student governments are ways for the administration to manipulate the student body, and I do not like that.")
4. Students are frequently misled about--or misinterpret--the areas of governance in which they may work to some effect, and they are largely untutored in the means they must use to make changes that are within their jurisdiction. To be perfectly honest, students sometime need, and frequently admit that they want, some degree of adult guidance. Left completely alone, they learn less about effective government than they do about anarchy, fuzzy thinking, the worst kind of role-playing, and sometimes, in despair, the frailty of reason in a mob.

Christopher Berrisford speaks to the point: "If student participation is the product of a genuine desire to provide students a direct experience in governance and responsible decision-making, then the lines can be drawn clearly and the results will be effective. If the underlying purpose is to mollify student unrest or to soften the effect of student opinion, then the problem will have been compounded, because the whole exercise appears ultimately to be another form of adult deception. I remember a television program . . . about the frustrations of a student at a prestigious boarding school who had tried to initiate change--in something as mundane as dress requirements, I believe. Instead of being given a clear indication of what he could and could not do, he was encouraged to organize a student committee. When he had done this and the committee had met and made its recommendations, he then discovered that he was expected to go through first a faculty committee and then further administrative consultation. His frustration grew as he told of each step that seemed to him to be placed in his way. The school's attitude was that he had been given every chance to present his opinion and communicate his point of view. His feeling was that he had been grossly deceived. After the

event, a description of the procedures involved might have given an outsider the feeling that students really had a chance to make themselves heard. The practice turned out to be exactly the opposite."

One of the students I talked with at Benner House, the snack bar on the Andover campus, put it this way: "I was in the student council in my high school when I was in the tenth grade," she said. "The bright kids were insulted by the stupidity of the whole fakey thing. The others just liked playing the game. They thought they might grow up to be Richard Milhous Nixon."

Honor Committees

Scratch around a little on any independent school campus--day or boarding, coed or single-sex--and you'll find one student-only group that works very well, indeed, thank you. It's the honor committee. (Don't look so incredulous. Yours, too, may be much stronger and much more influential than you think.)

I learned early in my school visits that you can get a point of view in the head's office, some remarkable understanding of the social quirks of kids from deans and assistant heads, and a candid report on the love affair from classroom teachers, who more or less dissolve when they start talking about their students. But if it's truth and candor you're after, walk up to the kid munching on his french fries or to the little enclave of girls who always seem to be whispering about the same thing, whatever that has been for the last few aeons.

After a while, I hated myself for the obvious skepticism that students read into my repeated questions about their honor codes. In almost every instance, however, they persisted in their belief that their honor system did work, even though they were just as unvarying in their dismay about numerous failures to "turn people in." Finding out why the system works as well as it does--if it does--could move us toward a subtler understanding of many of the complexities of governance. On the other hand, I'm not sure that we should poke very strenuously into a process that seems to rely heavily on mystique and strong peer loyalties, for we could easily, as well-intentioned outsiders, mess up a good thing.

Student councils don't seem to work very well; honor committees do. Is there some difference in concept, structure, or operations that makes one of these student organizations so much more successful than the other? The answer may be quite simple. A student group, if it is to function effectively, must be granted almost full responsibility and autonomy, even if in a clearly defined area.

Student councils exist in an amorphous state. They are charged with "the conduct of student affairs" and attempt to serve as liaison between the student body and the administration. The councils are expected to listen to

the populace, clarify and simplify their demands, guess at the administration's probable reactions, and, with that guess as a moderating factor, then forward any proposals to the head of the school. A pretty indefinite area of operations, especially for inexperienced politicians!

Honor committees, on the other hand, have been told (at least tacitly) by school authorities to forge ahead and take over in an area of peer relationships that is misty and remote from adult understanding. "Physician, heal thyself," says the head, and the students respond. Two things that seldom occur in other areas of school governance where students are called upon to serve happen quite automatically:

1. Almost total responsibility is conferred upon the students to devise and operate a governance system on their own. There may be a faculty adviser who can be called upon occasionally for his opinions, but in almost all successful honor systems the students make their own difficult decisions by their own standards. Left to their own devices, they show good sense, for example, in passing on leadership from one group to another each year. Also, the honor committee that has been given something approaching autonomy will admit to the occasional need for assistance and come to the head for advice or service.
2. Students have a clear understanding of the organization's reason for being. In effect, the administration says to the honor committee, "Keep your own house in order. Apply standards that you believe are just and proper; tell students who do not meet those standards that you are aware of their transgressions; warn them of your disapproval; if they continue to be disruptive to your society, come to the surface for help."

At Tower Hill School, in Wilmington, Delaware, the honor committee does not announce its meetings, and it discloses its activities only if a punishment is to be meted out. The headmaster, who happens to serve as the committee's adviser, has accepted all but one of the group's disciplinary recommendations in the past eight years--and that one exception was a case in which the committee had not known about a previous infraction by the defendant. One problem at Tower Hill and at other schools is that most of the referrals to the honor committee come from faculty members and not from the students themselves. One hears the frequent complaint that students won't "inform" on one another; perhaps not, in a formal way, but the perceptive honor committee often discovers things without being told and can warn certain students that their misdeeds will not be tolerated.

To preserve the strength and continuity of its long-established honor system, Landon School, in Bethesda, Maryland, has initiated two effective programs. Once a year, the students hold "honor-code seminars," in which students from several grades discuss the virtues and weaknesses of the system and the individual student's obligation to the entire student body. Another valuable

session is devoted each year to students in the middle school, who are introduced to the importance of the honor code by several of the older boys.

At Princeton Day School, in Princeton, New Jersey, where both students and teachers feel instrumental in most areas of governance, the "Student Code" has undergone frequent scrutiny and revision without losing its essential character. Originally, the code had been a means of assuring a degree of unsupervised quiet in the library and study halls. Later, the headmaster and two seniors worked on a series of revisions that distinguished three types of offenses: cheating, lying, and stealing; smoking, drinking, and the use of drugs; and "housekeeping" items such as gum-chewing and writing on school desks. Recently, the students have been working on a further revision of their code, hoping to change its "do not" tone to a more affirmative characterization of honor. In its present form, the code is simple and explicit:

The school community depends on trust.

Each year a student will sign the following pledge: Since the role of the school is to prepare each student for a society where lying, cheating, and stealing are morally wrong, I pledge that I shall try not to lie, cheat, or steal.

Honor systems seem to suffer chronically from two ailments, but neither need be fatal. First of all, students tend to plummet from idealism to cynicism as they discover instances in which the code has been broken with impunity. They are distressed at a system that doesn't work all the time. Of equal severity is the frustration experienced by members of the honor committee when they feel the pull between peer loyalties and the need for adult advice. Certainly there are injustices and naive decisions when authority of any kind is placed in the hands of the young, but we have all seen unjust and silly decisions at higher levels of authority as well.

Students in Advisory Capacities

It is quite unusual now for an independent school not to have students serving in at least an advisory capacity on committees charged with enforcing matters of discipline. The manner of dealing with infractions of discipline varies greatly among schools.

Harvard School. We have no disciplinary committee since we feel that most disciplinary issues call primarily for expert counselling--not punitive judgment. However, when serious cases do call for action, we invariably consult with elected student leadership on an informal basis, asking for their advice and assistance. We hardly ever act until those whom we have consulted understand, even if they do not entirely concur, with what we are doing.

Episcopal Academy. Although the Senate does not function as

a judicial body, we have brought students in front of the Senate who are having disciplinary difficulties. Generally, the faculty begins by questing, probing, and philosophizing with these malefactors. Soon, however, the student Senators chime in and begin to "tell it like it is." They are much more harsh with their criticisms and comments than the faculty and I think generally tend to have a greater impact on the errant student.

Thacher School. Students devised the scheme for the Discipline Committee. The headmaster approved reluctantly, three years ago, but has since discovered that the Committee is as much a boon to him as anyone. The Committee consists of five students elected for two trimesters by their peers from a list of those who express interest in the office, a teacher appointed by the headmaster for one trimester, and the administrator responsible for discipline, who serves as permanent chairman. All have one vote. The Committee disposes of all disciplinary matters from the trivial kind, for which a period in "detention" is the only penalty, up through all but those "major offenses" for which suspension or expulsion might be the penalty. By "disposes" is meant determining guilt or innocence, deciding on the penalty and, in more serious cases, advising parents of the offense and the penalty imposed. For major offenses only, where suspension or expulsion might be the penalty, the Committee recommends to the headmaster, who has approved in most instances, but has overruled in some. All disciplinary matters go to the Committee; none are decided separately.

Oakwood School. The Judicial Committee makes all decisions regarding violations of major rules; no Oakwood student is suspended or expelled except by action of this student-faculty committee. We find that Judicial Committee members spend nearly as much time hearing cases as they would spend in a class; students have said that they learn more sitting on the committee than they do in any courses. It is noteworthy that the Judicial Committee makes all its decisions by a Quakerly "sense of the Meeting." That is, all members of the group must assent to each decision. The judicial process sometimes seems cumbersome and frustrating; we occasionally yearn for the efficient dispensation of justice by a dean or headmaster. We conclude, though, that the experience garnered by committee members and the sense of deliberate judiciousness communicated to the community are well worth the price.

The membership of the Judiciary Committee at Princeton Day School is decided jointly by the student president of the Community Council and the headmaster. Northfield Mount Hermon asks for volunteers to serve on the Judicial Committee; these names are then presented to the school senate, which interviews the applicants and then makes the final selection. Ferry Hall School, in Lake Forest, Illinois, has a school court with six student members, a trustee, two teachers, and two houseparents. At Gilman, seven students make up the entire membership of the Judiciary Committee, which is used by the dean of students as an advisory body. And at Blair Academy, in Blairstown, New

Jersey, the faculty-student Rules and Discipline Committee enlists the aid of "alternate members" to extend the responsibilities.

Students are now being involved in a great many other areas of governance where responsibilities were once held exclusively by faculty and administration. The following odd-lot listing may indicate the degree of this involvement.

Students at Simon's Rock serve as admissions aides, help to interview new faculty, and have recently played a central role in the school's Task Force Committee, which examined the "quality of life" on campus. . . . At Colorado Springs School, students serve on the board's Future Planning Committee. . . . Peddie, Westtown, and a great many other schools have had active and helpful student participation on a number of evaluation committees. . . . Sidwell Friends holds an "open" faculty meeting once a month, to which interested students are invited. . . . Holton-Arms has reinvigorated its senior-project program by asking the senior class to present a new and revised proposal for the program each year; students also sit with faculty members in judging proposed projects. . . . Students at the Urban School of San Francisco sit on the Finance Committee, planning and carrying out methods of raising funds and reviewing yearly budgets. . . . Toward the end of each year, Westtown invites newly appointed heads of all student organizations to meet with faculty advisers to make plans for the coming year. . . . Oakwood School has turned over to the student Weekend and Entertainment Committee full responsibility for social events, "and the students hold the committee accountable for any tedious weekends." . . . Half of the voting members of the Curriculum Committee at Chestnut Hill are students, and a student also has been invited to sit with the Administrative Committee to help plan daily operations for the coming week. . . . Harvard School has had remarkable success with students as regular members of the Admissions Committee; they read applicants' files, submit their recommendations, and help to administer entrance exams. . . . Six students at Northfield Mount Hermon serve with department chairmen and the dean of faculty on the school's Academic Commission in evaluating courses, suggesting schedule revisions, and planning new programs. . . . At Peddie School, students meet frequently with the Curriculum Committee and also serve on the Social Studies Evaluation and Guidance Committee. . . . Nearly half of the student body at Tatnall School took part in the brainstorming sessions that led to the school's NOVA program.

Faculty-Student Senates

Out of the ashes of student councils has arisen a new bird that parades under a panoply of names: Community Council, Student-Teacher-Administrator Council, Governing Board, Dean's Conference, Faculty-Student Senate, and (ah, the power of linguistic precedence!) Student-Faculty Senate. All born in the late 60's or early 70's of Student Discontent bedded down with Worried Administration, these little bastards may now be scorned by their parents and their legitimate student-council siblings, but they are healthy and growing stronger--and sometimes more obstreperous--each day. They are love children who can surprise you with their brilliance and good sense, if you have the patience to put up with their pesky, upstart ways.

Thacher's experience is typical, as described by the school's headmaster, Edgar Sanford:

Students themselves developed the plan, subsequently approved by faculty and administration, for student participation in school governance. Apparently, in past history, few Student Council proposals were able to run the course through faculty and administrative hierarchy, disappearing into the maze and seldom reappearing.

The present Council consists of five students elected by their peers and five faculty, appointed by the headmaster. All have one vote. The five teachers represent the faculty as a corporate body, rendering unnecessary separate faculty consideration of Council proposals. Consequently, the Constitution provides that proposals approved by the Council go directly to the headmaster, who is required to respond one way or the other (approve or veto) within three days. Proposals are posted and the headmaster's response is to the entire student body assembled.

By establishing machinery such that the student representatives may thrash matters out with the faculty in the first instance, and by requiring a speedy response to proposals made, the system has done much to alleviate the complaint, so often heard on school campuses, that "nothing ever happens" to student government proposals. So far as I know, students are satisfied with the present system. There has not, at any rate, been any proposal for change, and there is a regular flow of proposals and almost weekly changes.

The proposals are remarkable in their variety, their lucidity, and their depth of concern. Within the last two years, the Thacher School Council has forwarded to the headmaster such recommendations as the following:

- a reduction of assemblies from five times a week to three
- "lights out" for sophomores on Friday nights to be moved back from 10:30 to 11:00 p.m.
- turtlenecks at dinner as a permissible substitute for shirts and ties
- an increase in breakfast cuts for juniors and seniors
- the abolishing of caps and gowns for the faculty at commencement
- amplified rights of representation for students appearing before the discipline committee

-- a revision of the senior-project program to allow other students to take part in independent study

All of the proposals are obviously the result of careful study by the council. They are presented concisely, but with a regard for difficulties that might be encountered in their implementation. Not only is it suggested, for example, that a corps of student tutors be formed, but details and dangers are carefully explored:

The members of the Council felt that too much formality would defeat itself. The suggestion that this group of tutors was highly selected would give an implication of prestige, which would undermine our intention of helping. To encourage a more informal basis, a student representative will serve as a clearing-house for teachers who think certain boys could benefit from help, for students who feel they need help, and for students who would like to tutor . . .

My favorites, however, are two proposals that the headmaster vetoed:

After careful deliberations, the School Council has passed a proposal (6 for, 2 against, 1 abstaining, 1 absent) to allow students to remove from their beds their headboards and baseboards. However, there are a number of stipulations which would insure that the pieces of the beds would not be lost or misplaced. [There follows a long list of "stipulations," including letters from parents attesting to their financial responsibility for each bed, bed-marking procedures, storage details, and permission from the school nurse.]

It is proposed (nine in favor, one abstention) that students be required to wear uniforms to all classes and meals. These uniforms would consist of school cap, blazer and tie, an appropriate white shirt, flannel shorts, and black dress shoes. Matching knee socks would be included, with green and orange garters.

Not only would uniforms enhance the character of Thacher students, but they would make the public aware of the fact that the boys are a group of fine, clean-cut, upstanding young gentlemen. These uniforms may also provide an interesting and exciting alternative to the trends toward casualness in everyday life, so insidiously apparent at Thacher.

It is further proposed that the students who originally presented the uniform proposal to the Council model the new uniforms.

Orme School, in Mayer, Arizona, has a Faculty-Administration-Student Board,

a policy-making group of six students and six adults that governs all aspects of student life. According to Larry Burgess, the school's student-government sponsor, "Although it is true that all too often our Board discussions center on the wearisome campaigns for change in dress, hair, and smoking regulations . . . they also quite often deal with much more meaningful topics such as faculty-student relationships, procedures for control of drug abuse, worthwhile recreational activities for students, and other areas of community concern."

At Episcopal Academy, in Merion, Pennsylvania, the Senate--formed originally to handle the functions of the faculty Executive Committee and the Student Council--has direct power over the nonacademic programs in the upper school, subject to the veto of the headmaster. It has recommending power in the areas of curriculum. There are two students chosen from each of the four classes in the upper school and eight members from the faculty. Episcopal's headmaster, James Crawford, says:

Although we have in the past spent a good bit of time covering the circular subjects of dress, hair, and smoking, the Senate has become somewhat "bored" with these matters and has gone on to what I would consider to be much more productive issues. In that they are directly responsible for the nonacademic operation of the unit, they have become quite concerned with some of the common administrative problems.

School spirit, student work and service, discipline, general cleanliness and care of facilities, and support of extra-curricular functions have all been studied by the Senate. There is a great deal to be said for the appreciation and understanding by students on the Senate when their classmates are seemingly unresponsive to the Senate's call for assistance and cooperation. It has been refreshing for me to watch students and faculty together wrestle with problems which have generally fallen under the wing of the administration. It has been equally refreshing to watch students encourage and in certain circumstances strong-arm their peers into support for the institution.

The school dining room was the subject of greatest interest at the two January meetings of the Episcopal Student-Faculty Senate, but there was also discussion of behavior in the common room, the timing of exams and vacation, assemblies, and "spirit." One section from the minutes of the January 21 meeting makes us all feel right at home (but note the difficulty you have in distinguishing the student members from the faculty):

Mr. Trimble brought up a proposal to abolish the mid-term marking periods in the second and third trimesters. He adduced as his principal reason an over-emphasis on testing. Mr. Djerassi wondered whether this measure would be a solution to the problem. Various faculty members questioned whether there was much mid-term testing as such. Mr. Isen felt that there was,

especially in the science department. Messrs. Kulp and Lee noted that with the increase of trimester courses in several departments, mid-term tests were increasingly desirable. Messrs. Hastings and Shearer felt that mid-term reports were valuable indicators to students of how well they were doing.

Mr. Crawford noted that the Senate had spent a good deal of time on this subject last year. Mr. Trimble stated his disenchantment with taking tests, and asked whether tests were equivalent to learning. Mr. Kahn seconded this view. Messrs. Kulp and Harter doubted that a vote should be taken on a motion without a week to think it over.

Mr. Lee moved the question; his motion carried, 10-2. A vote was taken on Mr. Trimble's motion, which failed of passage, 2-8-2. The Chairman promised a survey of the amount of testing.

Strong and active faculty groups are grappling with real concerns at other schools, too. At the Blake School, in Hopkins, Minnesota, the Senate (seven students, six faculty members) is commissioned to "discuss and evaluate any aspect of the school, exclusive of finances." Any policy adopted by the Senate becomes school policy unless defeated or altered by the Administrative Committee or vetoed by the headmaster. In the four years of the Senate, there have been no vetoes; twice the Administrative Committee has accepted a proposal but has asked for some revisions in methods of implementation, which were worked out acceptably.

Some of the policy matters handled by the faculty-student group at Blake are:

- the appearance code
- procedures for improving methods of giving exams and controlling cheating
- student evaluation of teachers and courses
- student exchanges with other schools
- recommendations on curriculum and grading
- evaluation of methods used in discipline
- improvement of assembly-chapel programs
- open meetings for the school to discuss policies
- recommendations on regulations concerning drugs, drinking, and smoking
- open-campus policy

-- regulations and supervision of commons room

John Edie, Blake's headmaster, feels that the Senate has great respect on campus and has done especially valuable work on open-campus rules, appearance (a "neat and clean" code), and suggestions on examinations and the control of cheating. "The Senate's greatest success, however, is that students and faculty get to know each other better and begin to understand each other's points of view and problems. This has been great!" Mr. Edie adds one familiar note, in commenting on the students' failure to supervise the commons room: "Students will not follow through in enforcing their own policies."

The Blake senate differs somewhat from others in its membership: the headmaster, the dean of students, and four members elected by the faculty; the student-body president and one additional senior; one junior elected at large and one additional junior; one sophomore; one freshman; and the president of the eighth grade.

The Dean's Conference (with equal faculty and student representation) is the central executive committee of Westtown School. Anne Wood, principal of the upper school, echoes the opinions of faculty senate members in other schools: "When problems are difficult, the meetings of this body may be extended and exhausting, but all of us who participate feel that it is tremendously valuable as we are driven again and again to examine our positions in the light of each other's views."

Public school administrators, conscious of the charges of "giving in to the kids" that might be leveled at them by parents and school boards, have not been at all unhappy with student councils of no great strength. At Staples High School, in Westport, Connecticut, however, a "senate" structure has been in effect for several years now, with remarkable success. The Staples Governing Board has ten student members, seven from the faculty, and three administrators, with the principal attending only by invitation.

James E. Calkins, Staples' principal, phased out the school's student government "to the regret of almost no one." A believer in "love and democracy as the keys to running a good school," Calkins has never been afraid to let his students know how he felt about them: "You'd think in a sophisticated community like this, it would be the kiss of death to say, 'I love you' to a kid . . . but it isn't. These kids are eager for human contact with adults." The Governing Board concerns itself with curriculum, student-behavior codes, school-and-community relationships, and extracurricular activities. The group meets weekly, with an additional evening meeting once a month. A 60 per cent majority vote is needed for a bill to be passed. There have been a few problems--too much time and work for the members; poor communications between the SGB and the student body at times--and a number of notable successes, including the institution of a "pass/no record" system of grading for one of a senior's courses.

"If the principal and the administration aren't willing to take risks," says Calkins, "this kind of system won't work. Running a school with a governing board is much less efficient than running a traditional school. You have to consult other people before you do something. Think about that. You actually have to consult other people." (The Staples Governing Board is described

in an article by Susan Jacoby, "What Happened When a High School Tried Self-Government," Saturday Review, April 1, 1972.)

In independent schools where they have been given a clear definition of their domain and some legislative responsibility, senates and similar faculty-student groups have become a vital part of the governance process. The chemistry is good. Students and faculty members work well together, understand differing points of view when they are discussed in a small group, and usually present to their heads sensible proposals that are the result of careful investigation.

All-School Meetings

There is a part of the American Dream that has us all coming in from the gelid March blasts, kicking the snow from our boots, and warming ourselves by the big wood stove before the town moderator ambles up on stage with the town clerk and the selectmen to call us to order. And then the dream gets painted in with vivid detail by Norman Rockwell, the nice mixture of "types" reminding us that there is, after all, something crotchety and at times comic about the democratic process.

Town meetings, independent-school variety, aren't much different from their New England model--although they miss out on some of the flavor provided by the babies, the local "hippies," the matriarch who complains each year about dogs in her garden, and the "summer people" who have been in full-time residency for twenty years now. The participants in school meetings may not be as colorful as those in northern Vermont, but they are just as contentious, as determined to "speak my piece," as prone to pull rank or enjoy horseplay as their Yankee counterparts:

C'mon, you guys! Quiet. Quiet! Does everybody have your little paper? . . . C'mon guys, shut UP. [The ringing of a shattering but ineffective handbell.] Will everyone PLEASE be quiet!

After an hour and a half of a two-hour meeting, the girls of The Southborough School, in Southborough, Massachusetts, have decided that they can't quite decide--on the color of the page-stock for their 1974 yearbook, the color of the ink, or whether a hard binding is preferable to a soft slipcover. They do know now that they want the new printer, who has promised to "do it better and cheaper." Some calm soul finally ends it all: "There is no way that this group can reach a resolution on a color of ink. . . . Now, come on. It can't be done. Let the yearbook board do it."

Adjournment? Not on your life. The next item on the agenda is a proposed change in the dress code:

For the academic day, members of the Southborough Community may wear attire appropriate to the customs of the times: for men [teachers] this means shirts and ties or turtlenecks with slacks and for women this means shirts, turtlenecks, blouses,

clean pressed slacks (not jeans), clean pressed skirts, jumpers or dresses. All pieces of apparel must be without obvious evidence of wear and tear, i.e., patches, fraying, etc. Furthermore, it includes appropriate footgear: sandals, loafers, conservative shoes, flats, heels, clogs, dressy boots.

After a rather rocky start on this new topic, one citizen objects:

"I don't like my own proposal any more."

"Why do you disagree with it?"

"Well, I just don't think we need a dress code."

All of which is followed by a few other sidetracking moments: "I don't think it's right for a man to tell me what to wear." . . . "I wonder if anybody has read the proposal!" . . . "I will put up with that only if males on the faculty all wear skirts." [Cheers.]

Finally, the girls get down to the pedestrian matter of boots: "Hiking or ski or other outdoor footgear will not be considered appropriate to indoor classes." All hell breaks loose. Fifteen minutes of impassioned perorations on slippery walks, the "glop we have to walk through," and "they're my feet!" Finally the headmaster, Pete Melcher, obviously frazzled but still strong in command: "All right. Strike everything after 'footgear.'" At 9:15 p.m. the student moderator declares a consensus on the general nature of the proposal, with more modifications to come at the next town meeting, next week.

Melcher believes strongly in the town meeting, despite its occasional turmoil and its meandering route to achievement. "If you are going to introduce students to realities," he says, "you can't even out the peaks and valleys. At Southborough, we wanted some means by which every individual in the school could have some say in what goes on." As for procedures, Melcher feels that a strick adherence to Robert's Rules of Order just doesn't do the job for student groups. "To kids, parliamentary procedure is a system by which a savvy group of people can manipulate them."

At Southborough, and at a number of other schools where "town meeting" is central to governance, an agenda is printed and distributed at least 24 hours before each session. The first order of business is the group's decision, by consensus, on the order in which items shall be discussed. Any item that has been on the agenda for two weeks, but has not been discussed, automatically takes top priority at the next week's meeting. Topics not listed on the agenda may be discussed at meeting time, but only if there is agreement that they should be introduced. During the course of the year, each Southborough student serves at a meeting either as moderator or member. (Typical of Southborough's humane regard for its constituents is the scheduling of its weekly town meeting at a time that will allow the students some free postmeeting socializing. Like teachers after a faculty meeting, "they want to kick off their shoes and really express themselves.")

Town-meeting systems are "sloppy," provide little opportunity for effective committee work ("the students are too egalitarian to yield to committees"), and "let's face it," says Melcher, "we spend some time just bickering. But in essence it's just like any other town meeting, where, despite some seeming chaos, real shaping is going on. . . . What is least important is efficiency. Much of the value is in the tussle." There are other drawbacks, of course. The moderators need to become more expert in chairing the session, skillful adults at the meetings can sometimes "ride anarchy into consensus," and the members of the community must be reminded occasionally that they can't legislate in areas that violate the law or run counter to the expressed desires of the trustees. (One protection: the headmaster is right there and must be part of any consensus.)

As rambling and discursive as they may be, as inefficient and chaotic at times, town meetings may be a school's best answer to "root-deep" governance. A head may learn something about his student body when he talks with their officers about a new proposal; he may infer more by talking with them in the corridors, having them over for breakfast, or joining them at occasional forums; but give each student a voice at a community meeting, and he'll use it, naked and unafraid. Furthermore, the head who has the patience and self-confidence to confront dissenting views head-on will appreciate the opportunity for full and open confrontation.

Daycroft School, in Greenwich, Connecticut, has modeled its successful Constitutional Assembly on the Colonial town meeting; Oakwood School, in Poughkeepsie, New York, despite finding that "efforts to change things are sometimes impeded by red tape," is pleased with a Community Government that "extends participation to the community at large"; and a number of other schools report gratifying success in such school-wide governance structures.

One of the most spirited and fruitful meetings of this type that I attended was at The Masters School, in Dobbs Ferry, New York. The School Community structure at Dobbs is simple and effective. The Executive Committee (ten students and nine members of the faculty and staff) considers proposals that come to it with at least ten signatures. After evaluation, the committee may either submit a proposal to a meeting of the School Community for discussion and an eventual vote, or they may table it. A tabled proposal may be brought before the School Community only with a petition containing fifty signatures.

School Community meetings at Dobbs are optional, but on the snowy Wednesday when I visited, there were more than sixty students and adults in attendance. Only one proposal was on the agenda, a cogently written request for the abolition of assignments that had to be undertaken and completed during vacations. The students were suggesting that they be informed of such long-range assignments well before a vacation began and that the assignments be due "a few days after" the end of any vacation.

The topic was explored fully: When are such assignments due now? Have many teachers given such assignments? Are these assignments really only suggestions for extensive reading? Are there papers due immediately after a vacation? Notable to one observer was the fact that lines were never drawn between students and teachers. Without reticence or inhibition, students politely but

forcefully rebutted faculty views, teachers crossed swords at times with the headmaster, and students shouted down other students. After forty minutes of discussion and a suggestion that the wording "a few days before and after vacations" be made more specific, Erika Francis, the student moderator, asked if the community was ready to vote on the proposal. They assented, and within a few days the community would make a decision by secret ballot.

According to Erika, "Last year was a real hassle. . . . Everything we attempted was voted down by the community." Nevertheless, recent actions by the School Community have included the abolishing of school uniforms at Dobbs, the institution of voluntary worship, the addition of the dean of students to the membership of the Executive Committee, and the right to smoke for students who have permission from their parents. The most critical issue at Dobbs in the past year has been a proposal that would allow eighteen-year-olds to drink in local public establishments or in faculty homes. The school's headmaster, Hugh Silk, is strongly opposed, and his trustees agree with his stand. If a drinking proposal were to be passed by the School Community, Silk would use his veto. (Neither Silk nor other heads use this overt display of authority very frequently. "Once or twice in five years," they say. "Out of 40 proposals, I've vetoed two." "If I make my views clear, they don't push for recommendations they think I might veto.")

The students I spoke with, at Dobbs and at several other schools, were sometimes dubious about the sincerity of the head of the school's reliance on community government. "Headmasters are politicians, when you come down to it," said one student. "He's able to think ahead of us on almost everything." And another felt that "you think he's listening, and then you notice that he's only waiting you out before he tells you what is really going to happen."

It may take some time for a school to learn to live with town-meeting democracy, but, as Mary Susan Miller, headmistress of Berkeley Institute, in Brooklyn, New York, points out, it has taken our nation some time, too:

Three years ago we dissolved the elected student council in favor of a Town Meeting form of government, feeling with the students that the former served in name far more than in deed. Every member of the school community belongs to Town Meeting and shares an equal voice and vote in it. An elected student president runs the meeting, setting up an agenda from the matters of interest given to her during the weeks before. In addition, anyone may raise an issue from the floor.

It has taken us a year or so and some wild arguments to learn how to use our democracy (which doesn't seem too long in the light of the number of years the country has been working at it). In the process we have made some wise decisions: we set up a student-faculty judicial board, we voted a new dress code--only blue jeans and hot pants are taboo (a concession to the Headmistress' Puritan ethic!), we voted to try a system of student advisors for misbehaving school citizens.

Constitutions

Constitutions, at least the school variety, do not make exciting reading. I have collected quite a few, and I find that I need a straight chair, a lamp with a 150-watt bulb, and more than a modicum of tolerance before I can tackle "Preamble: We, the students of Willow Woods Upper School, in order to establish a more perfect student government . . . ," especially when there are 18 pages, single-spaced, to follow.

Constitutions for organizations in which students are involved do reflect the schools that engender them. You can distinguish almost at first sight protective and officious institutions from schools where there is trust in an individual's good sense in coping with a variety of eventualities. Too many constitutions are both picayune and paternalistic, undoubtedly out of a desire to make sure that the students touch all bases. One school, for example, devotes almost two pages to "filling vacancies," and another lists, separately and ad nauseam, "impeachment procedures" for everyone from the president of the student body on down to the secretary-treasurer of the seventh grade. Equally common is the omission of a section on "powers." Without a definition of an organization's strength and scope, constitutions become perfunctory and formalistic documents of no real substance for the students who are to live under them.

Respect for the opinions of mankind requires that any school constitution make clear and honest statements on what an organization is chartered to do, followed by a clear delineation of the stages a proposal must go through in order to become law. Those who frame the document should not worry too much about organizational operation; let each group struggle with its own by-laws.

I haven't found a better, briefer, or more explicit document than the constitution for Episcopal Academy's Upper School Student-Faculty Senate. It has a preamble and seven short articles, a total of one and a half pages.

The preamble makes clear the source of the Senate's powers:

All powers of this Senate proceed by delegation from the Trustees to the Headmaster to the Assistant Headmaster in charge of the Upper School. This Senate may at its discretion delegate any of its powers to whomever it wishes. Whenever appropriate this Senate should solicit advice and opinions from anyone in the community.

The first four articles delineate the powers granted to the Senate in four areas--curriculum, discipline, extracurricular activities, and operational activities of the school. Each of these four areas is defined and then detailed. Then there is a clear statement of distinction between the Senate's powers of determination and recommendation.

Article One--The Curriculum--For the purposes of this Constitution, Curriculum is defined as including those matters pertaining to academic courses, chapel, the library, athletics, and guidance

as they involve the Upper School.

1. The Senate shall have the power to determine eligibility.

2. The Senate shall have the power to make recommendations regarding academic probation to the faculty, to make recommendations regarding curriculum to the head of the appropriate department after first consulting with him, and to make recommendations regarding guidance to the appropriate person after first consulting with him.

Article Two--Discipline--The Senate shall have the power to establish a disciplinary code for the Upper School, and shall work with the Dean of Students in its enforcement.

Article Three--Extra-Curricular Activities--For the purposes of this Constitution, Extra-Curricular Activities are defined as being all those non-academic activities voluntarily entered into by Upper School students.

1. The Senate shall have the power to regulate the operations, establishment and/or dissolution of all Upper School extra-curricular student organizations.

2. The Senate shall have the power to make recommendations to the Athletic Association and to extra-curricular student organizations such as the Scholium and the Vestry whose operations affect more than just the Upper School after due consultation with those school units involved.

Article Four--Operational Activities--For the purposes of this Constitution, Operational Activities are defined as being all those activities involved in the basic operations of the Upper School.

1. The Senate shall have the power to establish and supervise committees dealing with the operations of the Upper School such as parking, spirit, work and service, dining room, and hair and dress.

2. The Senate shall have the power to make recommendations in all other areas of Upper School operations such as study halls, admissions, and future development after due consultation with the appropriate persons.

[The last three articles of Episcopal's Senate constitution are devoted to membership and elections, procedures for making amendments, and a brief statement on ratification.]

As we have pointed out before and will again, student involvement in governance can be real and effective only if two simple criteria are met: the granting of independent responsibility, and the delineating of the particular areas in which that responsibility is to be exercised. An organization's constitution can be evaluated by the degree to which it fulfills those two needs.

THE FACULTY

All faculty rooms are pretty much like yours--the coffee urn, the mugs, the early-morning queue at the ditto machine. One dedicated soul (always a math teacher?) is refining his lesson plan. Somebody is always talking about the Knicks or the Bruins or the Steelers, and over in another corner is an English teacher, disconsolate, with a batch of papers: "But here, take a look at this one. It's even worse."

In faculty rooms I was pretty discreet. Invited to the school by the head, I didn't feel free to ask the first teacher I met, "What's he like? Do you have a reasonable say in what's going on? Give me the gripes." But teachers are teachers, and there are very few of us who have ever bothered to be restrained or tactful, even with strangers. So it was always just like home, the same vivid, outspoken people, interested in the same teacherly topics: "Great kids, better than ever" . . . "I never enjoyed teaching as much" . . . "The headmaster tries to do too much" . . . "He's never around" . . . "He doesn't get out enough" . . . "He doesn't know what's going on" . . . "What are the best schools you've seen?" . . . "Know of any good jobs?"

Teachers in independent schools may well have "job security" at the top of their list of professional concerns these days. If so, they don't verbalize that concern. They are, however, anxious to talk about three other matters, two of them directly relevant to school governance.

Faculty Associations

On one topic, faculty associations, there is general agreement among faculty members: they are either weak or transitory. Although one headmaster spoke to me heatedly about "the frightening spectre of unionization," most faculties that I have observed seem badly split on taking concerted action of any kind. Among the younger teachers there is very definitely some concern about the "job market," with an attendant dampening of activist ardor; older and more "secure" members of the faculty are generally quite firm in their belief that "he's doing the best he can for us in a tight period." Whatever the reason, there is an obvious disinclination on the part of most teachers to set up or join any faculty group that might be looked on suspiciously by their head.

When faculty groups do coalesce for action--and it is usually on the matter of salary plans, with an occasional faculty-to-board communique on a head's alleged malfeasance or ineptitude--they tend to remain united only up to the moment when they have submitted their proposals. They are remarkably patient, or phlegmatic, thereafter. Surprising are the number of instances in which teachers say, "Hey, what did happen to our recommendation?"--meaning the one that the head and board never got around to discussing in detail. (I spoke with one assistant headmaster who had been instrumental a few years ago in forming a strong and active faculty committee to work for several improvements, notably a

published pay scale. Three years have passed since the committee presented its request for some written indication of salary ranges at the school. When I asked him recently what had happened to the pay-scale request, he answered in a way that spells out the facts of life for teachers in many independent schools: "Nothing has happened. And you know, Don, we haven't lost anybody because of it." For teachers, it seems, submitting a proposal is tantamount to decisive action. Faculty associations seem to wither away and die after such a splurge of concerted energy.

One instance of a strong teachers' group is the Faculty Association at Rockland Country Day School, in Congers, New York. Though separate from the formal governance structure of the school, the association provides an important link between individual teachers and the headmaster. The chairman of the group feels that an organization with some continuity is more effective than one that goes into action "only when a 'crisis' arises." The Rockland Faculty Association meets monthly, one week prior to the regular faculty meetings, and helps to draw up the agenda for the faculty meetings. Suggestions from the association "carry more weight" than those that come from individual teachers, and the headmaster, James Downs, finds that he is presented with "more concrete proposals and fewer random gripes."

School heads profess to no special fear of faculty "action" groups. They speak of them in the same manner they use for senior pranks or complaints about school lunches. "The faculty did have such a committee several years ago," one headmaster told me, "when there was some concern about a salary matter. But we cleared the air on that one. I don't think the teachers now feel a need to work through an association. They come directly to me if they feel there are inequities."

Salary Scales

The most common complaint among teachers in independent schools concerns their inability to discover whether or not there are inequities, especially in the matter of salaries. Less than a third of the schools I queried provide for their faculties explicit descriptions of salary scales. For most teachers this is still a problem, one that rankles because of its persistence. "I would just like to know," said one woman who has been teaching at her present school for eight years, "how badly I'm being used." But teachers do not get down to dollars-and-cents specifics, certainly not with strangers, and most of them say that they don't discuss their pay even with close friends on the faculty. "I have no idea what anyone else gets. And I'm afraid to find out. I wouldn't know what to do if I discovered tomorrow that I was getting \$2,000 less than a guy I have no particular respect for."

"I go in to see him in a few weeks," one teacher told me. "If it's anything like other years, he'll tell me that I've been doing a great job, he'll ask me if I've had any special problems, and then he'll pull out my contract. There's always this pause, a great weighty silence. Suddenly we've changed from Bud and Larry, two friends who play tennis together on Sunday, to management and labor about to enter into delicate negotiations. I don't like it, and he doesn't either, but while he's fishing in a folder for my contract, we're both thinking about a fight. It never comes, of course." Last year, this teacher had a raise of \$350,

and "won't settle for less than twice that much" this year.

Fortunately, several of the schools I visited have begun to come out of the shadows on the matter of who's getting what. About two years ago, Gilman School formed a Trustee-Faculty Committee on Faculty Salaries. The committee faced up to the fact that "teachers were not sure how salaries were determined, what they could count on in the future, what the impact of increased endowment funds would be, whether their fringe benefits were adequate, or whether the present way of handling salaries and benefits was fair."

The committee's twenty-page report is of a kind that would be helpful in any independent school. It is thorough, quite honest in some of its doubts about what would be best to do and what is likely to be done, and wide-ranging in its exploration of possible areas of improvement. In addition to its full description of a salary plan, the study provides facts on a wide range of benefits: social security; a decreasing-term life insurance policy available after one year at Gilman; TIAA, with the recommendation that more than the present 50 per cent of Gilman teachers participate; Blue Cross-Blue Shield; major medical; vacations; summer employment possibilities at the school; faculty education (primarily summer study or night courses); the sabbatical program, which is funded and has provided for sabbaticals two out of three years to senior members of the faculty and every third year to the teacher with at least five years' service who has presented the most meritorious proposal; faculty housing (Gilman, a day school, has twenty-one faculty housing units and is considering building more); and the education of faculty children, including daughters, who must attend schools other than Gilman.

The salary plan at Gilman covers four ranges, with stated minimum and maximum annual salaries in each range (except for the omission of a maximum figure in the highest range). In each range there is a "percentage guide to salary increases," an indication to the teacher of his likely annual increment.

The Gilman report is exhaustive in its comparisons: a listing of the number of faculty members in each of the four ranges; Bureau of Labor statistics on the standard-of-living requirements for a family of four in Baltimore, at "austerity," "intermediate," and "higher" levels; Association of Independent Maryland Schools figures on teachers' salaries, both in schools where housing and/or board is provided and in schools where this is not provided, with beginning, median, and maximum salaries at five different levels; the current salary schedules for teachers in Baltimore City and Baltimore County; and the most recent NAIS report on faculty salaries, with figures on highest, median, and lowest salaries from eighty-five boys' day schools.

Along with its primary recommendation, that "the salary plan and its guidelines should be published for the faculty," the study committee also called for a yearly review of "the limits of salary ranges and the percentage guide to average raises" by a Standing Committee on Salaries that consists of trustees, faculty members, and the headmaster.

"Concern about the fair treatment of women" on the Gilman faculty is also discussed in some detail, particularly the concerns of teachers in the primary grades. After some discussion of coaching and extracurricular responsibility at the upper level, comparing it with a no-break academic day for the primary

teachers, the committee suggested the following guideline:

Our conclusion, then, is to consider primary teachers on the same basis as teachers on other levels, except that a differential of approximately \$500 should be recognized, based on the longer day and athletic and/or extra-curricular responsibilities of non-primary level teachers. It is quite possible, however, that a primary teacher may be awarded a salary equal to or above others of her same experience and professional background based on merit rating in the same fashion applied to other faculty members.

Germantown Friends School, in Philadelphia, also has a helpfully explicit salary plan for its teachers. There are four categories: the first is for beginning teachers; the second lists basic and maximum salaries in a three-year progression; the third indicates basic and maximum salaries for a teacher's fourth through eighth years; and the fourth category, which "will not include more than 25% of the teachers in the school," simply outlines the salary range for teachers with more than eight years' experience.

At a number of other schools, I was told that printed faculty salary plans were either in effect now or soon would be. Nevertheless, there is still, in the opinion of a great many teachers, too much foot-dragging and obfuscation. "What's he trying to hide?" asked one puzzled teacher. "All I want is some indication that I'm being treated fairly. I'm sick of saying 'thank you' at the end of a contract talk when I'm not really sure that he isn't sitting at the other side of the desk saying to himself, 'Whew, I got through another one without upsetting the budget.'"

Faculty Representation on Boards

To most teachers in independent schools, "the board" is a pantheon of gray Clark Kents with dollar signs on their chests who deliberate in Cloud Cuckoo Land on misinformation fed to them by the school's head and business manager. Board members alight once or twice a year, to invite three students out for dinner and "some good talk" and to perform a Visitation upon teachers (whose classes are almost invariably "taking an important test today, I'm sorry"). Their arcane deliberations determine academic fate--who shall prosper or be struck down, what great temples shall arise, and whither the institution. Only heads invoke their name: "Remember, I am only your head, one of you. None of it is my fault. I take my directions from the Board."

The Promethean embers in any teacher flame up when he thinks of sitting at the great table, Making Policy. "If I were there," he dreams, "I would tell it like it is."

But few are chosen. In only a handful of independent schools are teachers now serving as fully empowered (voting) members of the board. A much larger number of schools, and it is increasing rapidly, have both student and faculty representation to the board, but with no voting rights. A third alternative of

some currency provides faculty members, and sometimes students, the opportunity to serve on various committees of the board when trustees are in need of particular information on life at the school.

For one reason or another, teachers have become more insistent, or at least more frequent, in their requests for direct and full-fledged representation. To these requests heads have developed in the last few years a rather standardized lexicon of rejoinders, usually framed, with only slight alterations, in one of the following three forms:

One of the main duties of the board is to hire and fire the headmaster. I shouldn't be a member of the board and neither should any other school employee.

Nobody in his right mind would want to serve on the board, anyway. All we ever do, when we manage to get a quorum together, is try to figure out where we're going to get the money for the rest of this year's budget.

The board is beginning to do a good job now in making itself visible. Various committees of the board visit school frequently now and will be even more active in the future. They may have needed structured faculty input at one time, but they know the school and the teachers better now.

At Peddie School, in Hightstown, New Jersey, faculty requests did lead to the appointment of a teacher board member with full voting rights. Raymond Oram, Peddie's first faculty member of the board, believes that "the value of a faculty representative, at least in my case, seems to lie in participation on board committees. Many board members have very little first-hand knowledge of the school, and I can correct misconceptions, answer questions, and make suggestions. I currently serve on three of these committees--Academic, Insurance and Pensions, and Public Relations--the ones I asked to serve on."

More common are the situations at Chestnut Hill, Episcopal Academy, Staten Island Academy, and Whitby School:

Faculty sit as active, yet non-voting, members of the Board of Directors. They also sit on all Board committees that deal with development, student activities, and curriculum. They are full voting members of these committees and sub-committees and thus do have a part in the decision-making process. (Chestnut Hill Academy)

The President of the School is an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees. The Headmaster attends all of the meetings and gives a report on the school at each meeting. In addition, the Heads of the Lower and Middle Schools attend, as does the chairman of the Curriculum Committee. Therefore, there are three faculty-administrators at the meetings and

one faculty Curriculum Committee chairman in attendance.
(Episcopal Academy)

The faculty do not sit on the board, and do not meet with the board except to discuss a particular matter of mutual interest. The reason for this is more practical than philosophical: the board feel that there are frequently matters under discussion which are best dealt with in camera, and that the bulk of discussion deals with non-academic questions. (Staten Island Academy)

At the board level, action is begun typically through committee discussions, and such committees are comprised of trustees, faculty, and parents. (Whitby School)

In a most sensible and provocative article, "Address to Trustees" (The Independent School Bulletin, May 1973), Georgia E. Welles reminds us that "trustees must know their schools well, must be aware of educational trends in general, and must know the opinions of students, teachers, and parents to a much greater extent than I suspect most of us do." Looking at the other side of that coin, good governance also demands some knowledge of the board by students and teachers. Too often the faculty's only source of information about board operations and decisions is the head, who may interpret board actions to his teachers in a manner expedient to his own convictions or desires. Certainly, board members should initiate procedures to make certain that their opinions and recommendations are communicated clearly to all members of the school community.

Westtown School provides a good example of instructing faculty and students in the aims and operations of its board. A recent "power issue" of the school newspaper, Brown and White, had an in-depth profile of the school's General Committee, its function, structure, and interests, with examples of how it goes about the process of assessing problems and treating them. Other schools might well emulate Westtown in its desire to bring the board into view.

The Board of Trustees at Rockland Country Day School seems to have worked with special diligence to make itself "visible" and also to provide a helpful sounding board for teachers. The Education Committee of the Rockland board works closely with the school's Faculty Association on such matters as the use of the physical plant, the curriculum, discipline, and admissions.

There is little doubt that more and more schools are recognizing the value of establishing direct and consistent contact between faculty and boards of trustees. It is interesting to note, however, that this improved communication has not come about as a result of faculty militancy. Indeed, it seems to have followed board reaction to student requests for greater involvement in governance. At the Urban School of San Francisco, for example, two teachers serve as voting members of the Board of Directors, but there are also two student members; Germantown Friends has had faculty representation to the board for several years, and two students, a junior and a senior, also serve. Foxcroft's board meetings are attended by a faculty observer and three student observers, and the president of the student body becomes, upon graduation, a member of the Board of Trustees for a three-year term. Students at Landon serve on the Student Affairs Committee

of their board; at Westtown and Chestnut Hill Academy the trustees invite students to attend board meetings and serve on subcommittees. A great many other schools are now finding similar means of bringing both students and faculty members into working relationships with their boards.

Faculty Meetings

Teachers may differ in their opinions on the value of faculty associations, the need for clear indications of salary ranges, and the advisability of representation to the board of trustees. Seldom, however, do you hear a dissenting note to the common plaint: "Faculty meetings are a waste of time." Not at all strangely, teachers do not object to sessions devoted to students' academic shortcomings or their social foibles; what does perturb them, in the words of one teacher, is "the headmaster's monthly parading of the perfunctory and picayune. He seems to enjoy filling out the afternoon with minutiae, so that we never get a chance to express ourselves on matters of school policy." Henry Bedford, former dean of the faculty and now librarian at Phillips Exeter Academy, wonders if "they talk about that sort of thing at faculty meetings so that they don't have to talk about more important things."

Although these periodic confrontations between members of the administration and the faculty should provide forums for new ideas and dissenting views, they seldom do. Unlike faculty-student senates, where discussions are frequently heated but where agreements are forged from the heat, faculty meetings are too often devoid of real controversy or substantive accomplishment. "We shuffle some papers, do a little comic role-playing, and look at our watches a lot," said one teacher. "We get no more than we deserve."

One interesting note on faculty meetings: school heads, who remind student groups quite often about the need for the timely posting of agendas and the distribution of explicit minutes, are noticeably less punctilious in regard to agendas and minutes of faculty meetings.

Faculty Roles in Governance

Teachers, it would seem, are less interested than students in assuming influence in the governance of their schools. Or if they are interested, they restrain themselves, for one tactful reason or another. Certainly there are very few schools where faculties are exerting, or even asking for, policy-making power of any important kind. Whatever recent increase there may have been in faculty-directed governance has been gained by riding in on the coattails of student "activists" during the late 60's. The voice that was granted to students in faculty-student senates, for example, also made audible the demands of their teachers, who--as heads have sometimes suspected--may have more empathy with student bodies than with administrations.

This relatively new alignment of students and teachers on important committees may provide some new problems. One of them is outlined by Edgar Sanford, headmaster of Thacher School:

I feel, without solid evidence, that there has been some

disposition for faculty members on the Council to go along with the students without really agreeing and even knowing, or strongly suspecting, that their colleagues would not approve, leaving it to the headmaster to correct the situation by vetoing; or to go along without really having thought the matter through. For example, the Council unanimously approved a proposal that the administration give up any right to censor student publications, whereas any mature adult ought to know there is no way a headmaster can abdicate that responsibility. I vetoed, of course. I have on the agenda for our next faculty meeting to discuss the obligation of faculty members of the Council to represent their colleagues (since, otherwise, faculty are deprived of a voice) and to consider carefully all implications of proposals before voting.

Mr. Sanford also suggests the public posting of the council's agenda so that its members may seek out the opinions of others prior to a vote.

Joint committees such as faculty-student senates have provided at least one other change advantageous to the teachers: faculty representatives are usually selected by a vote of their colleagues. This may not seem so strange and wonderful until one looks carefully at the method of committee appointments in most schools. In almost all instances--admissions, discipline, curriculum, social affairs, and other committees--faculty members have been appointed to their posts by the head, and have not volunteered or been elected. Too frequently, the independent school teacher considers committee membership as another "duty," and is seldom asked to choose the committees on which he feels that he could serve most effectively. It may be a small, but important, step forward for the faculty that there are now a few new instances--senates, representation on boards of trustees--in which seats are filled by vote of a teacher's colleagues.

Faculty involvement in the governance of independent schools is neither as extensive nor as deep as one might expect. It is unfair to assume, however, that these limitations are imposed by crafty heads jealous of their power. Teachers are notably dubious about their own decision-making abilities, commonly professing a just-let-me-teach attitude, which, of course, allows them to carp and backbite when decisions are made for them. Jean Harris, neadmistress of The Thomas School, in Rowayton, Connecticut, is only one of the many heads of schools who decry the faculty's reliance on figures of authority:

The big problem becomes avoiding a mother (or father) image in the head of the school. (I find that hiding for an hour or two during the day sometimes throws everything into healthy confusion, and wonderful decisions are made by someone besides me.) One of my greatest surprises as head has been discovering how many adults are looking for that mother-father image. Some of the most naive questions I field are from adults.

Mrs. Harris confesses to an admiration for a system revealed in a Today Show

interview by a captain from the merchant marine:

Since he had to handle problems as diverse as navigating, spoilage in the hold, battening down hatches, sailors who got left in Singapore or who left pregnant ladies in Singapore, he was asked how he was able to handle the myriad questions that come his way. He said, "Actually, I find the answers aren't always as important as the tone you give them in. I have a system that seems to work very well for a certain type of question. The even ones get 'Yes,' and the odd ones get 'No,' and if you say them with conviction, people walk away satisfied and thinking, 'Now how in hell can that guy know all the answers.'"

Another deterrent to a more vigorous faculty (or student) role in governance is noted by Mary Susan Miller, headmistress of Berkeley Institute:

One ever-present threat to decision making in most independent schools is the authoritarianism with which they are set up under the Board of Trustees. By this I mean that the person—when all is said and done—left holding the bag is the School Head. From the taste of the hamburgers to the balance of the budget, from pre-school enrollment to college admissions, the Head bears ultimate and sole responsibility. This being the case, she must then bear the Last Word in all decision making. . . . I simply make clear to students and faculty that certain issues cannot come to a vote because I could not support the School if the opposing view won. . . . I don't like doing this, and I deplore the undemocratic process it entails, but I think the undemocratic organization of independent schools necessitates it. Perhaps one day the trustees will put ultimate responsibility in a triumvirate: a teacher, a student, and an administrator. It might not be perfect, but it would be more democratic than a philosopher king! Until that day, though, I hope to do a lot of listening to and voting with all members of Berkeley and still indulge in a little benevolent despotism.

CONCLUSION

Effective systems involving students in governance--like the schools in which they can be found--are invariably honest, simple in structure, small, challenging, unique to themselves, constantly changing, and based on a belief that some of our students are morally capable of making important decisions for their own society. These are qualities so general that they may appear obvious and trite. Nevertheless, they are worth some consideration.

Honesty

Christopher Berrisford, headmaster of Harvard School, reminds us that, when we granted to students roles in school governance, our pronouncements were not always the same as our hopes:

The movement to bring students into governance came at a time when they were vocal in their opposition to certain established practices. The desire to respond constructively to their ideas coincided with the realization that not all of them were practical. Hence, rather than deal directly with their suggestions, there was a tendency to encourage inquiry, investigation, or a participatory search for possible solutions. The announced motivation was to solve problems by having everybody work on them. Frequently, the hope was that the students would talk for a long time, go through several administrative hoops, and eventually get tired of the idea and give up (or graduate and go away).

We can avoid adult duplicity, says Mr. Berrisford, only if we make honest and clear distinctions for our students:

If student participation is the product of a genuine desire to provide students direct experience in governance and responsible decision making, then the lines can be drawn clearly and the results will be effective. If the underlying purpose is to mollify student unrest or to soften the effect of student opinion, then the problem will have been compounded, because the whole exercise appears ultimately to be another form of adult deception.

. . . Communication should be free and open. When student opinion is solicited, it should be clear at once whether the input will determine the decision, influence the decision, or make no difference at all.

Simplicity

Involved and precise structures for governance are looked upon fondly by their constructors, but with cynicism and distrust by students growing to a sophistication in matters bureaucratic. They are dubious about the sincere intentions behind complicated statements about "channels" and "procedures." ("Representatives from each Dorm Council will meet after dinner each Tuesday and submit their petitions, which, if approved, will be forwarded to the Executive Board for action during Friday's Student Affairs Period, and any approved proposals will be submitted to the monthly meeting of the Faculty-Student Senate, which will deliberate the merits of said proposals before calling a school-wide referendum, the results of which will be subject to the veto of the Headmaster, who, as the caretaker of the school, appointed and advised by the Board, is responsible for final approval and implementation.")

The best schools, certainly the happiest, seem to be those where "governance" is a strange word that doesn't seem to apply. I have asked students, "Do you feel that you have a real part in the governance of the school?" "Sure," they sometimes reply, "we can see him almost any time we want to." Such an answer seems more understanding and humanistic than the even more common, "Well, each class and each dorm has its own officers, and they serve on the Council, and I think we have a Senate this year. Hey, Sarah, do we still have the Senate?"

Systems have a life of their own, and if we are not mindful of their cold perpetuation, we tend to worship their comforting durability. Students, too, can be misled into such blind adoration if we are not wary and warning: the lighter the structure the better.

Size

Size does make a difference. It is remarkable how many school heads worry about institutional growth and how sincere is their envy of the small school, "where you can get things done without committees." Notable among large schools thinking small is Phillips Academy at Andover, where "clusters" provide small communities within a larger one. In some notes about Andover's "Blue Book" of student regulations, headmaster Theodore Sizer points to the need for limiting scale:

History shows that different aspects of civil law are handled best at differing levels of community. It is not by chance, say, that treason is a crime dealt with in the larger community and child abuse at a local level, within a small community. Scale is critical: the more subtle decisions and actions have to be--the more "individualized," in order to be fair--the smaller and more "familiar" the community making them needs to be.

.....

... If all students are to have more authority and

responsibility in the life of the community, and if the troublesome differing roles of [student] individuals . . . are to be sensibly understood and respected, and if "older" students in community life are to be treated by the faculty more as colleagues than as clients, then small scale is crucial: personal contacts, respects, understandings, and friendships are essential.

At Barlow, Hyde, and Southborough, three of the smaller schools I visited, "governance" seemed like a term much too ponderous for the systems of student participation that had evolved naturally, as they might be expected to do in a happy family. There is no reason why larger schools can't provide for several such small and happy "families" living together on one campus.

Challenge

Southborough School also provides an example of the excitement and "community" elicited when students and staff share a problem and face it together. The "problem" in this case is the exhilarating one of being young and inexperienced as a school. After three years of operation, the campus is still charged with the electricity of newness: the girls in the kitchen making lasagna for the first time, the headmaster clearing school drives with his new snowplow, the young faculty couple almost as proud of the achievements of the girls in their dorm as they are of their new baby's first successful attempt at crawling. When the students at Southborough use "we," they are not talking about students--one faction as opposed to that other one; "we" definitely means the school community, what "we" are trying to do in the establishment of a school.

Newness, of course, is only one of a multitude of challenges that a school must face. Share those challenges openly, and governance becomes meaningful, with students anxious to serve in roles fitting to their abilities.

Uniqueness

It is a shock to discover how easy it is to move from one independent school campus to another without sensing any essential difference in substance or style. Constitutions sound the same, statements of philosophy all bow to a "respect for the student as an individual," and students and teachers working together on governance committees reveal the same slightly bemused tolerance for one another. Undoubtedly, these similarities indicate success--independent schools in general are "doing something right." Yet, there is a yearning for distinctness that few schools can find in themselves or express about themselves. That must be considered a weakness for any school proud of its "independence."

Hyde School, in Bath, Maine--which refers to itself with impunity as "the school with a difference" and prides itself on developing each student's "unique potential"--may be dispensing medicine too strong for most academic tastes. Talk with any three visitors to this controversial school and you'll receive three shockingly different appraisals and evaluations. Nevertheless,

the group energy implicit in Hyde's self-recognized difference is worthy of emulation. No other school I visited knows itself as well or benefits more from this distinct self-knowledge.

Student Capability

Of greatest importance in the approach to fruitful involvement of students in school governance is the recognition that many of them are (and others should be trained to be) worthy of our trust and reliance. As adults, we have our doubts, but TheodoreSizer asks us to think and judge again:

This community has older and younger people, more experienced and less experienced, but we lump ourselves for everything into two separate groups, students and faculty. The former learn, the latter teach. There is much logic here, as the latter know many things that the former don't but would like to know.

But in areas of values and style of life, the division is not as clear as it is in, say, physics or Chinese philosophy. Not all faculty are at a higher level of moral development than all the students: the overlap, both in ethical judgment and in experience, is considerable (and to say so is a compliment to the student body rather than an insult to us adults). Given this fact, isn't it both fair and sensible educationally to give authority and responsibility to members of the student body who know how to use them, and who are treated unjustly by the faculty when denied using them? Put another way, couldn't the life of the community be strengthened by broadening the group of older people within it who feel responsible for it and have authority and autonomy within it?

We may have been driven to "student involvement" by pressures during the activist 60's, and our first responses may have been hedged with hypocrisy. We are learning, however, that our schools will prosper and provide for our students the richness that we want for them only if we share it with them, learn with them, govern with them.

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